

**Remarks**  
**Ambassador Hardt**  
**Graduation Ceremony and Launch of the Berbice Male Action**  
**Network (BeMAN)**  
**May 12, 2012, 1:00pm – 3:30pm**  
**Roadside Baptist Skills Training Centre, No. 68 Village, Berbice**

His Excellency Acting President – Mr. Samuel Hinds;

Honorable Ministers

Bishop Juan Edghill – Minister Within the Ministry of Finance;

Ms. Deolatchmee Ramotar - First Lady;

Other Distinguished Special Invitees and Guests;

Graduates,

Ladies and Gentlemen:

It is a real pleasure for Mrs. Hardt and me to be on the Corentyne Coast to participate in the 2012 Graduation Ceremony of the Roadside Baptist Skills Training Centre and the launching of the Berbice Male Action Network (BeMAN).

I would like to begin by congratulating all of the graduates from the various programs and conveying my best wishes for your success. It is my sincere hope that you will take from your experience not only the skills you have learned, but also a desire to give back to the community through your example by sharing your knowledge and experience.

The United States Embassy, through the Agency for International Development (USAID), has been associated with Roadside Baptist over the last ten years. We are pleased to have been instrumental in supporting Roadside Baptist's efforts in addressing HIV/AIDS prevention and reduction in the Corentyne area and we salute the contribution you have made in this regard.

More recently, USAID awarded a grant to Roadside Baptist under USAID's Democracy and Governance project - the Governance Enhancement Project (GEP). This grant was one of only three awarded, following a competitive process based on three factors: The effectiveness of Roadside Baptist's previous work with USAID, the

quality of the submission and the importance of the work: combating the increasing incidence of domestic violence. Domestic violence is a risk factor for HIV/AIDS and, in that respect, the grant compliments our earlier efforts.

The Government of Guyana, during its consultations with USAID on its programs, identified domestic violence as an issue of priority national concern. In 2009, when USAID was planning its engagement, there were almost daily reports about the scope and seriousness of the domestic violence “epidemic” – reports that sadly continue today.

As we know, domestic violence generally targets women. The distinctive quality of Roadsides’ grant application was that their proposal focused on men and their role in preventing Gender Based Violence (GBV). With USAID assistance, Roadside Baptist conducted workshops for teens and adults and training sessions for counselors to build public support for reducing domestic violence. The training included gender and gender roles, socialization of boys, anger

management, and conflict resolution. One of the most significant outcomes of these efforts is the establishment of the Berbice Male Action Network (BeMAN), which we are pleased to help officially launch today along with the Centre.

Following their training, members of the network have mobilized and sensitized men in many communities about domestic violence, its causes, how it affects their communities, and alternatives to violence. One of the champions in this regard is Mr. Desmond Nelson, a social worker here in Region 6. He has seen firsthand how the sessions on conflict resolution and anger management taught men how to work through conflicts and manage their anger. “Such knowledge, as he observed, gives men other options in dealing with problems rather than violence”.

It is our hope that the BeMAN Network will grow from strength to strength. I encourage Mr. Nelson, other members of the Network, and Roadside Baptist to intensify your efforts in reaching out to other men

and other communities to share your knowledge. Domestic violence is not a just a women's issue, but profoundly and inescapably about men too. It also indelibly impacts children, often with life-changing negative consequences, so it is a family issue, a community issue, and a societal issue in which we all need to become actively involved!

Again, my heartfelt congratulations to all of the graduates here this afternoon. And, on behalf of USAID and my Embassy, congratulations on launching of the Berbice Male Action Network.

Best wishes in your endeavors in the future.

Thank you.